

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - James Madison vs Duke

Sunday, March 24, 2024

Brooklyn, New York, USA

Barclays Center

## James Madison Dukes Coach Mark Byington Julien Wooden Terrence Edwards Jr.

Media Conference

Duke 93, JMU 55

MARK BYINGTON: It was an extremely difficult night for us, and you know, multiple reasons. When things come to an end, it's never a good feeling. You know, these guys put so much into it. It was an absolute pleasure and honor to coach them the entire season. It's such a great, great group of guys, and they love each other. I love them. I'll do whatever I can for them the rest of my life.

And we ran into a Duke team that I thought was very sharp. They came out and they put us on our heels, and our mistakes compounded tonight. It wasn't just one area. Sometimes we have bad areas, but it was too many things in one night to try to beat a good Duke team. It was turnovers, free throws, not -- rebounds. It was a lot of things that we've been great at throughout the year, and we weren't tonight.

So two things with that. Give Duke credit, and then we weren't at our best. But it's not going to be something we're looking back on this team thinking anything less than that they made history this year. They are a tremendous basketball team. They left a legacy at JMU forever.

And it's tough it ends this way, but a lot of times when you make a run like this, it's going to end for certain teams, and it happened for us tonight.

**Q. For either of the players, you guys did such a great job the other night being very physical and flustered Wisconsin. I know you're trying to play that game all the time. When they hit those early shots, does it take back some of your physicality? Does it make you less**



**aggressive on the defensive end at all?**

JULIEN WOODEN: Yeah, just kind of gave them life. You can kind of tell that it put us on our heels, like Coach said, and it was just kind of put us in a hole that was hard to get out of. Yeah, I thought this team fought. We never gave up and that's what I'm real happy about.

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR.: Yeah, just Ju explained it all.

**Q. Definitely a difficult way to end the season, but just talk about what it was like having that sort of support from JMU throughout the game, especially kind of towards the end when it was kind of becoming clear that Duke was going to win, but you guys were still fighting and the fans were still cheering and everything.**

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR.: We appreciate that. You know, we sorry we couldn't get the win today, but it just shows that all the work that we put in all season, for the whole JMU community to come out and watch us play in March Madness all the way in Brooklyn. So you know, it didn't come out the way we wanted, but we appreciate the support and now everybody knows who JMU is all over the nation and that's what we do it for.

JULIEN WOODEN: Yeah, pretty much exactly what Terrence said. It was huge. They were cheering when we were down and you could tell they were super into it and kept us locked in, too. Shout-out to them. We are definitely Dukes for life.

**Q. For Terrence, you guys defended the three-pointer really well all season and held teams under 30 percent. What was different about trying to guard Duke behind the arc. And McCain, in particular, what was the scouting report on him going in?**

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR.: I can kind of say, you know, when you got a big like Filipowski, he's skilled and a skilled passer and he's 6-10. So when you go in to try to get the ball out, it's kind of difficult guarding too when you're rotating like that. But you know, that's what just happened



when you playing good players. You know, shout-out to him for passing the ball well tonight.

**Q. What do you walk away with at the end of the season, the disappointment of tonight or the overall accomplishments?**

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR.: Definitely the overall accomplishments. Being the leader of the team, you can't let it sit. You've got younger guys on the team you have to be there for. We did make a lot of history. We surprised each other, I feel like. Going into the year, we can't know it was going to be like this.

This was the best team and one of the best coaches I ever had in my life. Stayed on me. He's very smart and shout out to him for just like coaching us up so well. And we just -- whatever he coached, we bring it to the floor and that's why we were able to win so many games.

**Q. What do you make of the way that they shot the ball, McCain, in particular? As a team they shot 50 percent from three, as well.**

MARK BYINGTON: They came in different ways. I thought our lack of rebounding got them inside/outside, second-chance points, and then they got some in transition. And then his team found him. They made great passes to him. We knew he's a great shooter. That wasn't a surprise. It was easier to figure out where he was when it was in the halfcourt action, but when they got the rebounds and kick-outs, we couldn't find him and transition, we didn't find him.

He got off to a hot start and he put us behind and then we started compounding our mistakes by how well he was playing.

**Q. You took this job, changed leagues. Do you have time now to think about what the last four years have been like or is that down the road in the off-season?**

MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, it's probably going to come the next couple days, it really will. You know, right now I'm hurting. You know, I didn't want it to end with this team. They didn't want to end. When that settles in, I will be more reflective and understand the great things that these guys have done this year, and then where the program has gotten from where we started to where it is now.

But right now, it's still too raw. But I will get there.

**Q. Along the same lines, you talked to Terrence and you talked to Julien, and both those guys are saying stuff that they heard from Matt Lewis when they were**

**freshmen. With the way rosters turn over so quickly now, how do you build a culture built on a culture like you have and how do you keep that going from year-to-year?**

MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, it's extremely difficult. I'm fortunate to have coached those guys for four years, and that's not normal. It's a great pleasure in just seeing them grow as people and players. And the value they have on the team of being around what they can do, not just for themselves but for everybody else, it can't be measured. It's extremely valuable. It's probably not going to happen much in college sports anymore. Probably not in basketball.

But I could tell you why they stayed. They love their teammates. They love JMU. And for them to have the season like this, to be rewarded for history-making season, great playing, doing things, they deserve it. They absolutely deserve it.

**Q. This has been a remarkable run especially considering the recent history of this program. Have you started to kind of think at all about where you would like to see the program kind of go in the future. Do you want to kind of see maybe March Madness become something that's a little bit more common for JMU, or even just see the point -- you've talked a lot about the difficulty of the Sunbelt being a single-bid league. How would you like to see sort of the league evolve with the program?**

MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, it's probably hard to answer tonight.

But one thing I will say, I thought the Sunbelt prepared us. The Sunbelt is a tough league. It's an underrated league. I thought it really did prepare us for this moment.

You know, to get here -- and obviously we didn't play great tonight, but we played really well the other night, and I thought it helped. You know, you look at our scores and you look at our streaks, and sometimes we devalue some of these other teams in the league. They are good and they are well-coached. And the Sunbelt, I would love to see multiple teams. I would love to see that. It's very difficult in a one-bid league.

But I could tell you this: The league got us ready. The league got us ready for this moment and for this tournament.

**Q. I feel like you've been building this program for this point. So to reach the NCAA Tournament, the second round, is this kind of the new expectation now for JMU**



## Basketball moving forward?

MARK BYINGTON: I mean, for a team to win 32 games and make it here, if you say that's what our goal is, I think you're going to be unhappy or unsatisfied because it's very, very difficult to get here, and it's very difficult to do what we did.

But to have a championship-level team that's able to compete every year, I think that's more of the goal. I think sometimes with the league, it's difficult because 1 out of 14 teams is going to make it here, and if it was different, then it would be different.

But I think the expectation is that when you're a coach, you want the team to get the best they possibly can get, and take them as far as you possibly can take them.

You know, I'm satisfied to know that I think we did that as a group, my staff and these players, and we ran into a team tonight that if they play like that, they are going to keep on playing. I mean, they were really, really good tonight.

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